

Regional AGENDA

METROPOLITAN KING COUNTY COUNCIL

September 1999

County Council approves millions for habitat restoration

The Metropolitan King County Council approved more than \$2.3 million for countywide fish habitat restoration projects in late August. The funding will be used for the preservation and enhancement of the regional watersheds.

Efforts to restore salmon runs in King County are being organized by location – specifically in five regional watersheds that cover the county.

A watershed is a place where hills, plains and people's lives are connected by falling rain and flowing water. Most of us know a watershed through major streams and rivers that connect rural lands with suburbs, suburbs with cities, and cities with the Puget Sound. Watersheds in King County include Central Puget Sound, Sammamish, Snoqualmie-Skykomish, Cedar River-Lake Washington, and Green River.

Approximately 50 projects were authorized for funding by the council last month. Revenues from

the King Conservation District's \$3 per parcel special assessment in 1998 and 1999 will fund the restoration projects, and will not require additional county money.

"These projects are key if King County is to protect and enhance salmon habitat as well as our quality of life," said Councilmember Jane Hague, who chairs the council's Budget and Fiscal Management Committee. The Budget Committee reviewed and approved the funding measure. "The projects were prioritized by the people who live in these areas and who know them best."

The council created the watershed forums in 1995 to set goals and

strategies in each area for surface water management issues, such as fish habitat, water quality, and flooding. The forums also were directed to coordinate on regional projects to avoid redundancy of effort and conflicts.

"This helps cut down on bureaucracy and spends the money where it will have the most impact," said Councilmember Larry Phillips, chair of the council's Regional Water Quality Committee. "In King County, we understand the importance of funding from the ground up."

Projects which received funding under the measure include: nearly \$500,000 for improvements at the Ballard Locks; more than \$21,000 for chinook surveys on the Cedar River; and \$210,000 for projects in the Issaquah Creek/Lake Sammamish waterways.

For more information on King County's watersheds and salmon recovery efforts, check out the county's website at: <http://splash.metrokc.gov/wlr/>.



Councilmember Dwight Pelz visits the restoration of Hamm Creek.

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King County: A long history of supporting the arts

The arts in King County have undergone phenomenal growth over the last decade. Through innovative programs and public and private support, the King County Council has made the 1990s a boom time for arts, especially in the suburbs. Last year alone, more than 5.1 million people attended arts events in King County.

Jane Hague recently delivered that message to a group of elected officials at the National Association of Counties' (NACo) annual conference in St. Louis. "King County has a long history of supporting and valuing our arts community. Cities and towns throughout the region are working to establish a sense of place and unique identity via the arts," said Hague, who serves as NACo's president elect.

Support for the arts in King County can be traced back to 1965 with the formation of a King County Arts Commission, the first of its kind in the nation. The arts commission is a group of volunteers who works closely with county staff to recommend funding, policy, and advance regional cultural opportunities. The group, through grants approved by the council, provides operating support to 106 diverse arts organizations located in communities throughout the county.

The council funds four arts commission programs: Sustained Support; Cultural Facilities; Cultural Education; and, Special Projects. These programs support everything from capital projects and arts organizations to curriculum-based arts programs and individual artists.

As a result of this support, cultural facilities in King County have taken on a new face over the past decade. In the 1990s, including private and public money, the aggregate investment in cultural facilities is more than \$400 million. The King County contribution totaled approximately \$25 million, making King County the largest public sector arts supporter in the state.

New facilities in the region include: the Seattle Symphony's Benaroya Hall, one of only 10 major concert halls built in the world every century; A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle; Issaquah's Village Theatre; the Knutzen Family Theatre in Federal Way; the Kirkland Performing Arts Center; and, the Bellevue Art Museum (BAM). BAM will break ground on its new facility this month.

"In many cases, King County funding leveraged the needed private support to complete a project," added Hague. "The real key is public buyoff. An institution or facility cannot be successful without some amount of public 'ownership' in the project.

"Government support for the arts is an investment in the creativity of its people and in the collective creativity of its communities. Communities cannot expect to successfully compete in the future 'marketplace of ideas' without the spirit of innovation. The arts fuel creativity."



Crayons, pencils & Beethoven

County supplements school arts budget

More than 52,000 students in 85 local schools return to classrooms this month that will be filled with drawing, painting, dance and music thanks to the latest round of Cultural Education grants from King County.

In June, the Metropolitan King County Council approved spending \$418,500 in hotel-motel tax revenues on 62 different arts projects for the 1999-2000 school year. It is part of the county's Cultural Education Program, which provides grants to organizations and individuals working with teachers and schools to integrate cultural studies into the curriculum.

This year's allocation for Cultural Education grants is a 41 percent increase in the number of projects approved for funding. And, 25 of the 62 recipients are first-time grant winners.

"One of the best aspects of this program is that it touches so many people in a positive way," said Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer, chair of the Utilities and Natural Resources Committee which reviewed all the requests for funding.

"As a former music teacher, I know how important the arts can be in a child's life," said Council Chair Louise Miller. "Listening to a Beethoven symphony or gazing at Monet landscape can open a child's eyes to a world of beauty they didn't know existed, and then ignite their own personal creativity in ways that ripple throughout all areas of their life."

Since it's inception in 1990, the Cultural Education Program has reached students in all 19 school districts in King County.

King County recognized for outstanding environmental protection programs and increased public access

Several King County programs received national recognition for their outstanding work from the National Association of Counties (NACo) at the organization's annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri earlier this summer.

The prestigious NACo awards were handed out to King County's Solid Waste Reduction Program, Waterways 2000, and Civic Television (CTV).

King County's Solid Waste Division won a "Best of" category award for its innovative Solid Waste Reduction Program, which brings agencies from across the nation together to help curb waste. King County was one of only three counties on the west coast to win a "Best of" category award, and received the highest honor of any county in the Northwest for environmental protection and energy programs.

"We are blessed to live in such a beautiful region," said Councilmember and NACo president elect Jane Hague. "Residents enjoy a high quality of life, in large part due to King County's commitment to environmental protection. We are proud to be leading the way nationally."

Waterways 2000, an innovative King County program designed to preserve land along waterways throughout the area, received the 1998 Environmental Award. The program, initiated in 1994, has resulted in preservation efforts along Bear Creek, the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, the Cedar River, Griffin Creek, Patterson Creek, and the Green River.

"It's great to see national recognition for our efforts to permanently preserve the best remaining habitat for salmon in King County," said Councilmember Larry Phillips, founder of the Waterways 2000 program. "Rapid population growth and declining salmon runs required the county to act decisively to conserve our county's critical watersheds – which we did!"

CTV, the county's public television station, also received accolades for their Accu-Vote program, and a public service announcement on the Emergency Alert System. CTV improves public access by providing television coverage of King County government to approximately 150,000 King County homes.

NACo, based in Washington, DC, represents more than 1,800 counties around the nation.

PugetPass - a regional solution for multi-county travel

Wouldn't it be great if you could travel by bus from Tacoma to Everett by using only one bus pass? Well, now you can with PugetPass, a new, all-purpose bus pass which is accepted on Metro Transit, Community Transit of Snohomish County, Everett Transit, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit.

PugetPass is the product of a regional fare coordination agreement among the five participating transit agencies. King County Councilmembers were instrumental in getting board members of the five agencies to join in the Regional Fare Forum. The Regional Fare Forum's mid-1998 recommendations led to creation of the PugetPass. "This is an example of regional governance at work," said King County Councilmember Maggi Fimia. "People don't live, work or play in the same community anymore."

PugetPasses are offered in a variety of denominations from 50 cents to \$4.

Although the different transit systems still charge differing rates, the PugetPass face value will apply towards each fare.

Fimia, who chairs the Regional Transit Committee, said, "We're trying to increase ridership and make the bus system more convenient and efficient. Hopefully, this will encourage more people to ride transit." For more information about PugetPass, please visit the county's website at http://transit.metrokc.gov/bus/pp_regionalinfo.html



The new PugetPass will be replacing Metro passes.

Council vote scores touchdown for voters

A recent council vote lowering admission and parking taxes at the Seahawks' new stadium and exhibition center events is good news for sports fans and taxpayers. Fans purchasing Seahawks tickets and paying for parking at the stadium will notice the savings in their wallets.

"We are saving the taxpayers in this state \$76 million by seeking tax-exempt bonds to finance the new stadium," said

Councilmember Jane Hague, chair of the Budget and Fiscal Management Committee. "The governor and state treasurer requested this action, and once we researched it for ourselves, we saw that it made fiscal sense."

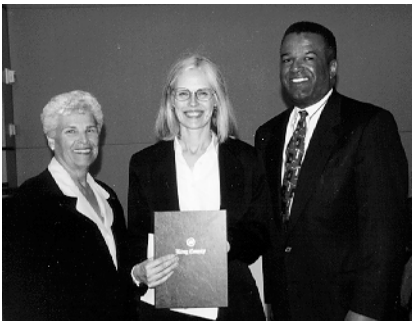
State officials want to insure that bonds issued for the construction of the stadium and center would be tax exempt and qualify for a lower interest rate.

The original stadium-financing package was set up to use any

balance of funds in the account for the development of youth playfields statewide. The tax-exempt status – with its lower interest rate – will fund construction of recreation and sports fields over the next 20 years. If the IRS classified the bonds as taxable, the interest rate for payoff would be much higher and could cut into the revenues designated for construction of youth playfields.

"This is a good deal, because we are reducing the taxpayer dollars being spent on the stadium," said Councilmember Greg Nickels, vice chair of the budget committee. "The state treasurer assures us that the slightly lower tax revenues will be offset by the much lower interest payments."

What we're doing . . .



Council Chair Louise Miller (left) along with County Executive Ron Sims (right) presented a Certificate of Recognition to Seattle Detention School to congratulate it on its recent success in establishing a new computer lab for its student body. Glenda Platt (center), representing the Seattle Public School System, accepted the recognition.

The information in this newsletter is available in alternate format upon request. Alternate format includes braille, large print, and/or audio. For more information, please call 296-1708, or TDD/TTY at 296-1024.

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